

**Presentation 4:
Qualifications Systems to Promote
Lifelong Learning; the Case of
Recognition of Non-formal and
Informal Learning**

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ASEM Lifelong Learning
Conference: “Increasing
Opportunities and Removing
Obstacles for Lifelong Learning”

Nha Trang, 29-30 October 2009

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)

(the opinions expressed in this power point presentation are those of the author alone)*

Agenda

- Background
- Qualifications systems for LLL
 - Pressure for Change
 - Policy Responses
 - Mechanisms
 - Example: Qualifications Framework
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning
 - Definitions
 - Rationale
 - Country Practice
 - Food for Thoughts

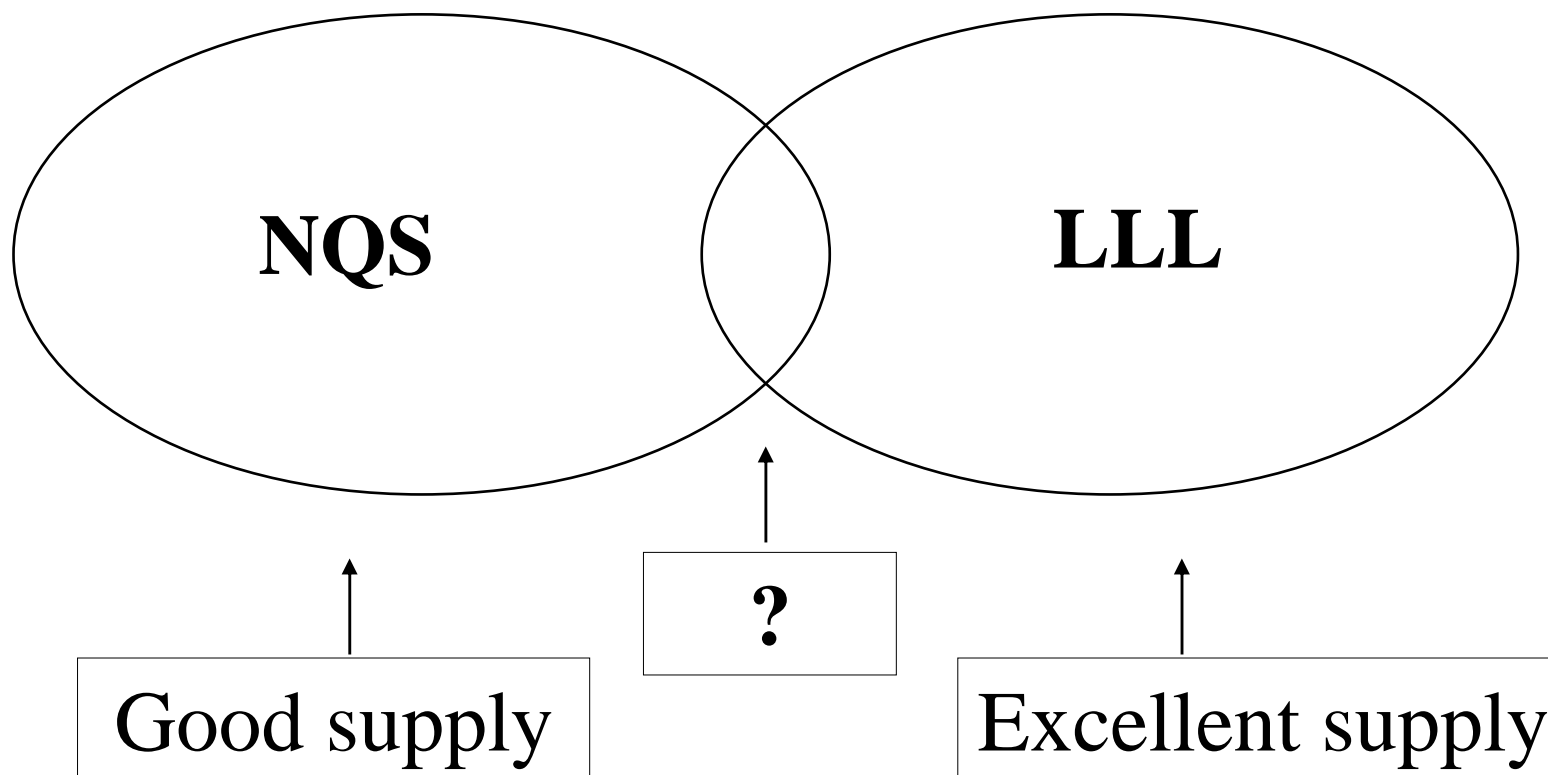


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Synopsis.



This link is identified as *mechanisms*



Process and Participants

Country Report and/or Thematic Groups:

Australia, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (French speaking), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, **Mexico**, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia, **Spain**, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom

www.oecd.org/education/lifelonglearning/nqs

However

There are few conclusions
we can draw from
quantitative evidence





Typology of qualifications systems

1. Dual system / alternating schemes
2. Qualifications framework
3. VET in upper secondary education
4. Central organisation of education
5. Regulated entry to the labour market
6. System for recognising non-formal or informal learning
7. Credit system
8. “Credentialism”

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Pressures for change

What are the recent policy responses to the lifelong learning agenda that involve national qualifications systems?

Pressures for change (1/6)

Broad economic pressures

- **Discrepancy between job training and qualifications** => Qualifications Framework and standards
- **Global economic trends or local needs** (needs to be responsive to innovation, development of enterprise, human capital, skills shortages...)
- **Qualifications systems**: seen as having the potential to better link education and work
- Pressures from **enterprises** (full range of qualifications, basic skills...)
- Promotion of greater **mobility** creates pressure on national qualifications systems

Pressures for change (2/6)

International pressures

- Relative ranking in PISA/TIMSS/IALS/ALL
- EU: recognition for labour mobility and mobility of learners => qualifications structures that are consistent with other countries (European Qualifications Framework)
- Parity between different recognition systems



Pressures for change (3/6)

Demographic pressures

- Ageing
- Immigration
- Indigenous population

Pressures for change (4/6)

Social and cultural pressures

- Not divorced from economic and demographic issues
- Learning for its own sake
- Behaviour, citizenship and democracy
- Broaden ways of gaining credit (recognition of non formal and informal learning)
- More flexible vocational education and training for people in disadvantaged situations, for social inclusion and work
- Matthew effect, SMEs => pressure on **Qualifications systems** to give upper secondary education



Pressures for change (5/6)

Pressure from learners

- Communication
- Coherence
- Transparency

Pressures for change (6/6)

Pressure from technological change

- Using opportunities created by the new technologies (most up to date production methods)
- Also for training and retraining
- Technology has encouraged the growth of international qualifications

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The 9 Policy Responses

1. Increase flexibility and responsiveness
2. Motivate young people to learn
3. **Link education and work**
4. Facilitate open access to qualifications
5. Diversify assessment processes
6. Make qualifications progressive
7. Make the qualifications system transparent
8. Review funding and increase efficiency
9. Better manage the qualifications system

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20 Mechanisms: **A Checklist**

- 1) Communicating returns to learning for qualification
- 2) Recognising skills for employability
- 3) Establishing qualifications frameworks**
- 4) Increasing learner choice in qualifications
- 5) Clarifying learning pathways
- 6) Providing credit transfer
- 7) Increasing flexibility in learning programmes leading to qualifications
- 8) Creating new routes to qualifications
- 9) Lowering cost of qualification
- 10) Recognising non-formal and informal learning**



20 Mechanisms: **A Checklist**

- 11) Monitoring the qualifications system
- 12) Optimising stakeholder involvement in the qualifications system
- 13) Improving needs analysis methods so that qualifications are up to date
- 14) Improving qualification use in recruitment
- 15) Ensuring qualifications are portable
- 16) Investing in pedagogical innovation
- 17) Expressing qualifications as learning outcomes
- 18) Improving co-ordination in the qualifications system
- 19) Optimising quality assurance
- 20) Improving information and guidance about qualifications systems

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Example: *Establishing a Qualifications Framework*

Qualifications frameworks can make progression routes clear, remove dead ends and can bring coherence and quality assurance to qualifications systems.



Example: *Establishing a Qualifications Framework*

Individuals might be motivated to learn if they can be guided towards appropriate qualifications for their aspirations. They might also have confidence in nationally approved qualifications.



Example: *Establishing a Qualifications Framework*

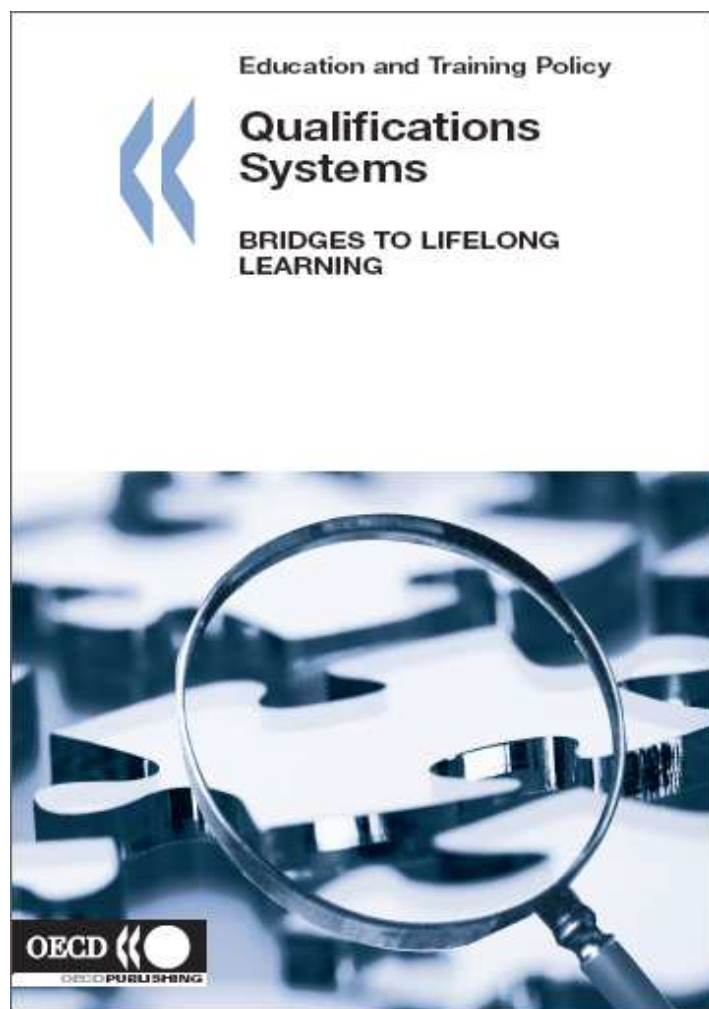
Employers will find a framework helpful in setting out qualification requirements for a job and in relating an applicant's qualification profile to a standard reference point. It may help rationalise training provision.



Example: *Establishing a Qualifications Framework*

Providers might find a framework of qualifications useful for promotional material as they can market qualifications according to a well-known structure and, like recruiters, they might feel more secure in the knowledge that certain qualifications are national benchmarks.

Want to know more?



With Mike Coles (QCA)

For a short summary see:

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf

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Main Conclusions in 2007

- Together with:
 - Qualifications Frameworks
 - Credit Transfer Systems
 - Involvement of all Stakeholders
 - Information and Guidance
 - ...
- ... recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a mechanism to promote Lifelong Learning



Participating Countries

22 countries on 5 continents
(16 review visits)

Australia, Austria, **Belgium-Flanders**, **Canada**,
Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece,
Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, **Korea**, **Mexico**,
the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, **South Africa**,
Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom

www.oecd.org/edu/recognition

Idea: RNFIL

- Recognising all learning, whatever the context (whether formal, non-formal or informal)

Issues and Questions

- What is it?
- How do you measure it?
- How do you assess it?
- What is recognition?
- Who does it?
- Does it work?

Terms

- Many terms (English):
 - **RPL** (Australia, South-Africa, Ireland...), PLAR (Canada), APL or APEL (UK...)...
 - RAS (Recognition of Acquired Skills)
 - (Recognition of previous knowledge ☹)
 - Recognition of Learning Outcomes
- Other languages:
 - Anerkennung von non-formalem und informellem lernen (Austria, Germany), EVC (Flanders, Netherlands...), VAE (France), RANFI (Mexico), Acreditación (Spain)...

Recognition of What: NFIL

- Many definitions of NFIL
- Not consensual
- Formal learning: structured in terms of content, scheduling, organisation and financing
- Informal learning: unintentional
- Non-formal learning: varies a lot (in between, for local specificities)

Recognition

- Recognition too has many meanings (corresponding to different objectives in fact)
- Keyword: here it's social recognition : whether outcomes have value and are used in the society?
- Key issue: recognition does not necessarily mean a high level of formalisation, but it needs some

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Rationale for Organising RNFIL

- Time and Cost (untapped human capital)
- Motivation (not starting from scratch)
- Skills shortages (availability or... visibility)
- Visibility of skills, knowledge and competences
- Distribution of qualifications
- Demography...
- Employers do it all the time (practical/informal)
- Regulated occupations / ISO process / Public contracts...



A Very Didactic (Edifying) Exercise

- There has always been:
- Formal recognition of formal learning
- “Informal” recognition of formal learning
- And more recently:
- Formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- To avoid the risk of relying on:
- Informal recognition of non-formal and informal learning

Why is RNFIL a Policy Tool?

- RNFIL is a policy tool because:
- Job matching
- Training has a cost
- Unqualified individuals/workers may have skills
- **It's flexible: continuum of outputs, from self assessment (portfolio) to full certification**
- Motivator for resuming formal studies

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Overview of Key Issues and Practice

- Rhetoric
- Information, advice and counselling
- Legal framework
- Piloting/Evaluation (data... ☹)
- “Physical” support: [e-]portfolio and the like (ProfilPASS, Competence passport/card...), certification
- Assessment methods: exam, simulation, observation, interview (standards...)



Overview of Key Issues and Practice

Financing and fees

Quality assurance

Dedicated assessment centre(s)

Aims and outcomes: exemptions, credits, full qualification

Recognition of NFIL will not create economic growth

Recognition of NFIL does not create the skills, knowledge and competences it is meant to recognise...

...But it is still a learning process



Applications of RNFIL

Type of Application	Exemplar Countries	Typical Examples



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Second chance school certificate	Canada, Mexico, Norway, Chile, Spain	GED, <i>Bachillerato</i> , adult education referenced to school system



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Entry to higher education	South Africa, UK, Belgium (Flanders)	Universities working together (CENEVAL), access to higher education courses
Exemptions from formal programmes	Hungary, Chile, UK, Belgium (Flanders)	Modular higher education programmes, with exemptions available, specific credits. University discretion over exemptions



Applications of RNFIL

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Labour competence certification	Netherlands, Germany, South Africa, Belgium (Flanders)	Exceptional procedures to allow those with established competence to gain existing formal qualification

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VET system redesign	Spain, Mexico, Hungary, Australia, UK	Creation of RNFIL-friendly qualifications

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Discrete applications	Belgium (Flanders), Hungary, Canada, Greece, Germany	ECDL, language certificates, professional bodies

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Why is RNFIL not Universally Used? Barriers in Short

Psychological (stiffness, legitimacy of NFIL): culture shift
Understanding what it is about (“you will give degrees to everybody”)

It has a cost

Input process unknown (therefore not quality assured)

It does NOT create skills, knowledge and/or competences

Many actors and stakeholders are against RNFIL (trade unions, universities, employers...)

Example: Employers: risk of reduction in commitment to formal training programmes; or employers may fear upward pressure on wages if workers are more qualified

RNFIL: Islands of Good Practice

- RNFIL is an option if:
- Some groups of the populations or individuals are highly skilled but unqualified (no certification)
- RNFIL is widely accepted as being a learning process
- Labour market or some occupations are highly regulated
- The move from learning to assessment is widely accepted



RNFIL: Islands of Good Practice

- RNFIL is an option also if:
- RNFIL are carefully designed
- Social recognition of NFIL is not an issue (second best qualifications accepted by the society, and employers in the first place)
- The society and the system are flexible enough so different forms of recognition – from self recognition to certification – are accepted

Food for Thoughts

- The take up is small
- In short: legitimacy, credibility and information/guidance
- RNFIL is not free, not even always cheap (cheaper than training)
- Nevertheless, for some people, under some circumstances: excellent opportunity; Higher Education a good example: access (exemption of academic prerequisite), Exemption of all or part of the courses (awarding of credits), Full certification
- Therefore:
- All learning should be recognised
- In some instances, the recognition process could/should be formalised (and even could lead to certification)



Read More? QS and QF:

- Coles Mikes and Patrick Werquin (2008). “National Qualifications Systems to Modernise VET Systems”, in: Descy, P.; Tessaring M. (eds) *Modernising vocational education and training. Fourth report on vocational training research in Europe: background report*. Luxembourg: EUR-OP. (Cedefop reference series).
- Coles Mike and Patrick Werquin (2009) “The Influence of Qualifications Frameworks on the Infrastructure of VET”, in R. Maclean and D. Wilson (eds.): *International Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training*, Unesco-Unevoc Book Series, Springer, The Netherlands.



Read More? RNFIL:

- Werquin, Patrick (2007): “Terms, Concepts and Models for Analysing the Value of Recognition Programmes.” www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/58/41834711.pdf
- Werquin Patrick (2007). “Moving Mountains: Will Qualifications Systems Promote Lifelong Learning”, *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 42, No. 4, p. 459–484. <http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0141-8211>
- Werquin Patrick (2008). “Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning in OECD Countries: A Very Good Idea in Jeopardy”, *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, 3 2008, p. 142-149. <http://www.lline.fi>
- *Werquin Patrick (2009): “Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning in OECD Countries: an Overview of Some Key Issues.” In: REPORT, No. 3,* <http://www.report-online.net/english/start/>
- Recotillet Isabelle and Patrick Werquin (2009). “The French VAE: Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning as a Visa for a Job?”, *European Journal of Vocational Training*, N° 48, 2009/3. www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/projects_networks/EJVT/DEFAULT.asp



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http://www.oecd.org/document/17/0,3343,en_2649_35845581_42097617_1_1_1_1,00.html